

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District

Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



Federal Contracts Not Flowing to NY Small Business

As Ranking Democratic Member of the House Small Business Committee, Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez joined her Democratic colleagues and small business owners to release the findings of the fourth annual Scorecard report. The report evaluates 21 agencies on their mandated small business goal achievement.

"We all know the economy is hurting right now. Many companies are buying less, laying off workers, and trying to cut costs" said Congresswoman Velázquez. "But the federal government isn't. In fact, from 2001 to 2002, federal procurement dollars rose 7 percent, from \$220 billion to \$235.4 billion, yet small business opportunities declined. Even though the government bought more last year, it still failed to meet a single one of its small business goals for the third straight year."

In 2002 New York City received \$643 million contracting dollars and small businesses received only \$91 million, or just 14 percent of that. According to the 1997 census data (the most recent), New York City was the number one location for women-owned businesses and yet in 2002, New York state ranked 12th in federal contract dollars to women-owned businesses. New York state ranked 3rd in the number of minority businesses and yet in 2002, it ranked 16th in federal contract dollars to minority-owned businesses.

The government missed its statutory small business goal of 23 percent and its 5 percent goals for both women-and minority-owned businesses. This failure cost small businesses an estimated \$13.8 billion in federal contracting opportunities. The grades are also the worst they have ever been – out of the 21 agencies examined, there were no A's, 4 B's, 5 C's, 9 D's and 3 F's. The overall grade given to the federal government in Scorecard IV was a D.

The release of Scorecard IV comes more than a year after President Bush promised to take steps to fix the broken procurement system in his small business agenda. Given the results of Scorecard IV, the Bush plan has failed



Congresswoman Velázquez and colleagues speak out about federal contracting and small business.

to give small businesses more opportunities in the federal procurement arena.

"This move is typical of an administration that has said one thing and done another," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "When the president had the chance to live up to his rhetoric during the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, rather than ensure that strong protections for small businesses were in place, the administration removed them. Then it relaxed current procurement policies, making it even less likely that small businesses will get equitable treatment."

"Small businesses just need a chance – a foot in the door so they can show federal agencies what they can do. After all, small businesses make up the majority of all businesses right here in New York City. They are the lifeline of the American economy. Now we just need the federal government to acknowledge this."

Call for Investigation into Local Detention Center

Congresswoman Velázquez called on U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft to appoint a special counsel to investigate the conditions of confinement and allegations of abuse at the Metropolitan Detention Center (MDC), a federal facility operated by the Bureau of Prisons in Sunset Park, following the September 11 attacks.

"The Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Justice (DOJ) released a scathing report in April documenting the treatment of the 762 noncitizens held on immigration charges in connection with terrorism investigations," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "The report details conditions of confinement at MDC that were not properly conducted, excessive restrictions on communications with family members and legal counsel, and patterns of physical and verbal abuse."

Under the Justice Department's regulations, the Attorney General is required to appoint a special counsel when "a criminal investigation of a person or matter is warranted;" the investigation "by a United States Attorney's office or litigating Division of the Department

of Justice would present a conflict of interest for the department;" or "it would be in the public interest to appoint an outside special counsel to assume responsibility for the matter."

The department has acknowledged the abuses documented by the Inspector General, but makes "no apologies" for this conduct, according to a DOJ spokesperson.

In addition, during testimony before Congress in late June, Ashcroft stated that 18 cases of misconduct had been brought to the agency's attention, but only four were being considered for further investigation.

Congresswoman Velázquez recognizes the outrage in the wake of the September 11 attacks, and the need for heightened security, as well as the stress and demanding work schedules faced by the MDC staff. But she also believes that due to the serious nature of the allegations at MDC, the limited level of investigation by the Justice Department, and the failure of the agency to accept full responsibility for violations documented by the Inspector General, the appointment of a special counsel is warranted.

Velázquez Attends Launch of Brooklyn Designs

In an effort to promote Brooklyn design talent, Congresswoman Velázquez joined the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce at the launching of Brooklyn Designs, which brought together 30 of the area's contemporary designers and manufacturers for a three-day exhibit. The exhibit was sponsored by local Brooklyn organizations including ABC Carpet and Home, Independence Community Bank, Interior Design, Time Out New York, and West Elm.

"Brooklyn designers are some of the most talented in the world," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "This is the perfect way for these artists to showcase their work and give area residents a reason to purchase design products locally."

In the exhibits shown at St. Ann's Warehouse in DUMBO, the show's organizers put together a series of seminars on subjects like "Making It – Who Gets Ahead in Challenging Times," to hands-on design sessions for consumers, which were all free with admission.

As Ranking Democratic Member on the House Small Business Committee, Congresswoman Velázquez is dedicated to efforts to help local businesses grow and thrive.

"I want to recognize the efforts of Ken Adams and the Brooklyn Chamber for putting this unique exhibit together for all of Brooklyn to see and enjoy," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Through this event, Brooklyn's growing creative economy came to light and I'd like to see that continue."



Congresswoman Velázquez joins the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce for launch event of Brooklyn Designs.

Child Care Funding Needs to be a Priority

Federal funding has been requested for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) the principal federal program supporting child care services for low-income families in the 2004 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill by Rep. Velázquez. She asked that an additional \$11.25 billion in funding per year over 5 years be provided for the grant.

"The President's 2004 budget request for CCDBG is inadequate and does not address the difficulty meeting the demands for child care," said Congresswoman Velázquez. "One of the keys to helping low-income parents find and sustain employment is access to adequate child care. This funding would ensure that families transitioning from welfare to work have the services they need in order to become self-sufficient."

Recent data has indicated that one-third of the states have waiting lists for child care, some with over 200,000 children on the list. Approximately 2.2 million of the nearly

16 million eligible children are receiving assistance – this represents only one in seven children. The situation is predicted to get only worse as more and more states face budget crises.

"Investing in child care is cost effective and saves taxpayers approximately \$7 for every \$1 spent by reducing school dropout rates, welfare dependency, criminal activity and juvenile delinquency," said Congresswoman Velázquez. "It is critical that we address the need for this grant in order to satisfy the needs for families seeking child care assistance."

Funding for set-asides for CCDBG programs were also requested, including \$100 million for infant and toddler care, \$10 million for research, \$1 million for Child Care Aware, a national resource and referral line/Web site that helps families find child care, \$19 million for school-age care and \$173 million for quality assurance.

Velázquez Fights Cuts to Federal Voc-Ed Programs

Congresswoman Velázquez called on Congress to restore federal funding for career and technical education, cut by \$333 million in the Bush administration's 2004 budget.

"Career and technical education programs help students learn and apply the academic and high-level technical skills needed in today's workforce," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "These programs are also a key factor in strengthening the nation's economic competitiveness in the global and technological marketplace."

Acknowledging the importance of federal investment in career and technical education, Congresswoman Velázquez moved to protect initiatives to integrate academic and technical coursework, provide for career guidance to help students explore postsecondary opportunities, and Tech Prep, a series

of local consortia that link secondary and postsecondary career programs.

"As an integral component of the total education mission, career and technical education contributes to the goals of high student achievement, student retention, and motivation to graduate," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "We know that students perform better and stay in school when they believe their coursework is relevant to their future endeavors, and career and technical education provides this connection."

These federal voc-ed programs fall under the Perkins Act and help students experience a "seamless" transition into meaningful postsecondary experiences, including apprenticeships, training programs, technical and community colleges, and four-year higher education institutions.

Grants Awarded to Our Community

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

*Long Island University Brooklyn Campus \$133,026
For Sol-Gel synthesis of bioactive glass materials.

U.S. Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration

*Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation \$275,000
To develop a program to lead to enhanced economic growth.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Bureau of Primary Health Care

*Sunset Park Family Health Center \$322,500
For expanded medical capacity.

The New York Community Trust

*Project Reach Youth (PRY) \$60,000
To help PRY recruit immigrant teens for peer activities

Universal Service Administrative Company -- Schools and Library Division

*Our Lady of Perpetual Help School
For Internet access. \$1,092.96
For telecommunication services. \$1,651.20

*Tomer Dvora School
For Internet access. \$4,589.10
For telecommunication services. \$12,741.30